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NOTE STORAGE

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The Wearing of Herons' Plumes or 'Aigrettes.'

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Fig. 1. Snowy Heron or Egret (*Ardea candidissima*) in wedding dress. The plumes, or 'aigrettes,' grow from the centre of the back, and are removed, with the skin from which they grow, by a circular cut with a knife, as shown in Fig. 2.

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NO form of feather adornment has been and is more harmful in its effects than the wearing of 'aigrettes' or herons' plumes. These dainty, graceful feathers, unlike the distorted skin of some poor hummingbird or warbler, carry with them no suggestion of death, and many a woman on whose bonnet they are placed is wholly ignorant of the unspeakable cruelty the taking of these feathers entails. If each plume could tell its own sad history, every humane woman in the land would raise her voice in protest against a fashion which threatens with extinction one of the most beautiful of animate creatures.

Those interested in the sale of herons' plumes often deceive purchasers by telling them that these feathers can be procured without injury to the bird, or that they are found after being shed; both absolutely false statements which, nevertheless, delude the uninformed into being participants of a crime against nature at which their souls would revolt, if they but knew the sickening facts in the case. These facts it is the object of this circular to briefly state.

Aigrette plumes constitute the wedding-dress of the several species of white herons or egrets, and are worn only during the nesting season. The birds are exceedingly sociable in disposition, and when breeding gather in colonies or rookeries, often containing hundreds of pairs.

The plume-hunter, having discovered a rookery by watching the birds as they fly to and from their nests, surveys the ground, learns the lines of flight followed by the birds, and the perches or lookout-stations they usually frequent when returning to their homes. Armed, prefer-

ably with a small rifle, he then secretes himself in a favorable position. The birds now have families to provide for and are active throughout the day. As they return with food for their young they rest a moment on the lookout perch, offering an excellent mark to the hunter concealed below. The bird falls, the slight report of the rifle does not alarm others that soon follow, and within a few days most of the parent birds have been killed, while the nestlings, lacking their care, die of starvation.

The method is simple, – any boy with a gun can become a plume-hunter,—but so effective that at the present rate of destruction the herons will soon succumb to it. A Florida plume-hunter once told the writer that with two or three assistants he had killed 300 egrets in one afternoon ; another boasted that he and his party had killed 130,000 birds (mostly plume-birds) during one season.

Having practically exterminated the egrets in Florida, plume-hunters have turned their attention to other parts of the birds' range ; advertising in local papers, offering large prices to native hunters, and organizing expeditions to explore the coasts and inland marshes, from our southern boundaries to the Argentine Republic.

To prevent the killing of birds throughout this great region is obviously impossible, and laws which alone prohibit their destruction are valueless. Until, therefore, laws are passed forbidding the wearing of aigrettes, the salvation of the herons rests solely in woman's hands.

Can any humane woman, knowing these facts, wear in her bonnet plumes, which are an undeniable evidence of her approval of merciless slaughter and indescribable suffering ?

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Fig. 2. Plumes of the White Heron, or Egret (*Ardea egretta*), attached to the skin from which they grow, as taken from the back of the bird by the plume-hunter.